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Extended essay cover

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: English

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: The Most Powerful Weapon

An analysis of the employment of the English language in order to shape
different points of view.

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters)

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

was tenacious in her approach to researching this topic. She came to me with a clear idea of the type of research she wanted to conduct, but she had to narrow her focus quite a bit to specific news outlets & a specific news event. She met with me several times throughout the year to discuss the research process & to discuss ideas as she uncovered unexpected results. Sadly, some of this hard work gets lost - a bit - due to proofreading lapses & some glitches with clarity. I remain impressed, though, with how well she handled a difficult topic & how much she learned & grew during the process.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent 4 hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Criteria	Achievement level					
	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3	
A research question	<input type="text" value="1"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
B introduction	<input type="text" value="1"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
C investigation	<input type="text" value="2"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
D knowledge and understanding	<input type="text" value="1"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
E reasoned argument	<input type="text" value="1"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
F analysis and evaluation	<input type="text" value="1"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
G use of subject language	<input type="text" value="2"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
H conclusion	<input type="text" value="1"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
I formal presentation	<input type="text" value="2"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
J abstract	<input type="text" value="0"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
K holistic judgment	<input type="text" value="0"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
Total out of 36	<input type="text" value="12"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	

An analysis of the employment of the English language in order to shape different points of view.

Student Name:

Candidate #:

Date of IB Exams: May 2014

Category: English

Advisor's Name:

Word Count: 2,222

Abstract


This essay examines how an English newspaper in Europe covered the U.S. debt ceiling vs. how an English newspaper in the United States covered the U.S. debt ceiling. After being assigned to the English subject area I already had it in my mind that I was not interested in writing a literary analysis, but rather exploring new aspect of the English language that is reflected in numerous new articles. Through my research and extensive study of my topic I have been able to reach the conclusion that, when journalists write articles from different perspectives, they often tailor their writing to appeal to specific audiences and clarify their point of view using the power of the English language.

Additionally, while searching for sources to support my thesis I also encountered responses to the United States Debt Ceiling that were not at all what I was expecting. This required me to also consider how points of view would be different not only based upon the writer's country of origin but also on their political affiliation. This was especially evident in the several United States news sources I chose from in that there were a number of articles written from the perspective of president Obama supporters, while there were also numerous articles written from the point of view of Tea-Party members and republicans. Not to mention that financial affiliation also played a major role in the writer's standpoint; one such example was an article written from the viewpoint of Chief Executive officers from the United States, who were most definitely in support of the U. S. Debt Ceiling because in their opinion it was beneficial for the global economy. Overall, through one year's worth of research I was able to narrow my topic and find sources that support and refute my general argument.

Word Count: 300

Table of Contents

A. Abstract.....	1
B. Table of Contents.....	2
C. Introduction.....	3
D. The United States Debt Ceiling.....	4
E. Europeans Are Accustomed	5
F. Europeans Believe These Actions are Childish	6
G. The U.S. from a European Standpoint	7
H. Objectivity	8
I. Economic Turkey.....	9
J. Conclusion	10
K. Works Cited (Bibliography)	11-12



Introduction

The manner in which words are expressed is just as important, if not more important, as the words themselves. Although it is common to study the English language by completing a thorough analysis of a work of literature, it is also appropriate to examine several points of view on a contemporary conflict. Communication is the key to many different aspects of life, thus it is important to examine how the English language is employed in order to communicate opposing perspectives. Studying these opposing perspectives allows us to penetrate the topic and reveal the essence of the issue at hand; in this case it is the United States debt ceiling. This concern is extremely important in that it affects a majority of the world's citizens. It has triggered very strong responses from many countries around the world, and such reactions are most evident in the newspapers from specific countries in Europe and North America. From the United States there have been articles written in the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the Atlantic, and Forbes magazine. On the other hand, there are also a number of European nations that had a lot of input with regards to the debt ceiling. Among these European regions there is the United Kingdom and several Balkan countries. Furthermore, when examining the different points of view it is crucial to identify factors that will significantly influence a writer's utilization of the English language. Such factors may include, but are not limited to, one's political affiliation, the economic state of the country or countries that they are writing about, the history of the relationship between two countries or regions and so on and so forth.

The United States Debt Ceiling

To begin, a debt ceiling is the upper limit set on the amount of money that a government may borrow. The United States recently experienced a brief shutdown of a percentage of the federal government. Ms. Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), acknowledged this in a press release where she stated:

"The U.S. Congress has taken an important and necessary step by ending the partial shutdown of the federal government and lifting the debt ceiling, which enables the government to continue its operations without disruption for the next few months while budget negotiations continue to unfold." ¹

Lagarde is evidently in favor of the actions that congress has taken, as she uses words such as important and necessary to describe the government induced event that occurred. She also provides support by including reason as to why it was "necessary and important" for the federal government to shut down.

In her address she goes on to say that:

"Looking forward, it will be essential to reduce uncertainty surrounding the conduct of fiscal policy by raising the debt limit in a more durable manner. We also continue to encourage the U.S. to approve a budget for 2014 and replace the sequester with gradually phased-in measures that would not harm the recovery, and to adopt a balanced and comprehensive medium-term fiscal plan." ²

¹ Lagarde, Christine. "Statement by IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde on U.S. Debt Ceiling Action."

² Lagarde, Christine. "Statement by IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde on U.S. Debt Ceiling Action."

With this Lagarde stresses the importance of particular action the government and citizens will need to take in order to prevent further crisis. She includes words such as essential to do so, but she also “encourages” the United States to consider the specific acts that she lists in order to achieve a “balanced” and “comprehensive” fiscal plan. Those two adjectives assist Lagarde’s argument in that they convey a likely positive outcome with regard to approving the 2014 budget.

Europeans Are Accustomed

The following three pieces of evidence are taken from “The US Debt Ceiling Strife from a European Perspective.” This is crucial to keep in mind because the article reflects a very strongly opinionated perspective of European people with regard to the United States debt ceiling, which most of them view as a crisis. Yanis Varoufakis initiates his piece of writing with this segment:

“Cooled down in the proverbial 11th hour, at least until it is brought back on the boil next January, the US debt ceiling clash puzzles Europeans and gives them an opportunity to re-assess their own leaders’ shenanigans. Europeans are used to political debacles resulting from economic crises. It is, after all, what we have been doing in Europe over the past 4 years with embarrassing regularity.”³

Varoufakis highlights the confusion that Europeans have encountered as he not only uses words like “puzzled” but he also mentions the fact that the debt ceiling has affected Europe in a manner that has caused them to reevaluate the action of their own government leaders. He creates a sentiment of discomfort and disgust, in the last sentence of this selection, when he reveals the unfortunate reality that the European people are used to economic crises. This perspective,

³ Varoufakis, Yanis. “The US Debt Ceiling Strife from a European Perspective.”

surprisingly, causes the reader to infer that the Europeans, specifically in the Balkan region, are partially responsible for the economic predicaments frequently find themselves in. The United States cannot solely be at fault because crises similar to it have occurred before,

Europeans Believe These Actions are Childish

Furthermore, there is additional reference to the shocked reaction to the United States debt ceiling with regard to actions that many people have perceived as immature and unnecessary. This is opposite to the argument that Lagarde provided earlier, where she claimed that it was obligatory and imperative that the government

“What Europeans find hard to wrap their minds around is the opposite chain of causality: Economic crises resulting from political chicken games of seemingly astonishing childishness.”⁴

He explains the difficulty people have grasping the concepts that Lagarde attempt to illuminate. The dispute that continues to occur in the American government and the political intimidation is quite frankly irresponsible and very unnecessary from the perspective of European. An idea that justifies this uses of English to shape his point of view is the fact that the actions of the United States government, regardless of whether or not they are childish, are jeopardizing the stability of other countries' economies. Varoufakis is successful in persuading his readers with his direct and blunt language because he make it clear that the bottom line is that many Europeans are suffering economically. The above text selection and the press release from the International Monetary Fund (page 5) are perfect examples of proponents and contrarians tot the United States debt

⁴ Varoufakis, Yanis. "The US Debt Ceiling Strife from a European Perspective."

ceiling. In addition they reveal how crucial it is to read a variety of points of view to truly understand the core of the issue being studied.

The U.S. from a European Standpoint

Lastly, there is one more excerpt from the same article "The US Debt Ceiling Strife from a European Perspective.", that is actually some-what different from the others in that it further elaborates on the hint that the economic crises that parts of Europe is currently experiencing, is not only the fault of the United States of the debt ceiling that has been enacted.

"Of course it is crucial not to trivialize what is going on in the United States. Once we look a little more closely at the political economy of the Land of the Free, it all begins to make sense. This impasse is not about debt. When America's debt to GDP ratio went up by 40% to bailout Wall Street, the Republicans did not even squeak. Their current squealing is about those who do not need social security and affordable health care not wanting to share into the costs of those who do need social security and affordable health care. So, whenever Europeans witness kicking and screaming about the US debt "being too high", it helps to recall that the cacophony is a mere tactic for stopping tax dollars from being committed to the weak; to those who never benefitted from the bailouts that pushed the debt to its current level of over 100% of GDP." ⁵

This article takes a turn and after Varoufakis has captivated and convince his readers he gradually presents the bigger picture or a broader perspective. There is more focus on the actual situation that is happening in the United States and how politics and greed are playing a silent but major role as well.

Although a good majority of written pieces are altered to represent a restricted perspective, there are also sources that present a journalists effort to remain neutral. The reality is that most people tend to gravitate towards more opinionated and subjective works, because it is more satisfying when one can identify with what they are reading. In

⁵ Varoufakis, Yanis. "The US Debt Ceiling Strife from a European Perspective."

addition, when attempting to remain objective writers tend to enumerate fact and/ or events and occasionally there will be some incorporation of quotes from different ends of the spectrum. Overall, it is quite difficult for meaning to be applied to the facts whilst remaining objective.

Objectivity

An example of this attempt to remain objective is presented in this section of an article from Forbes magazine written by Cedric Muhammad, who asserts that:

“Eventually however, as was the case in Europe, wealthy and powerful banking families influenced members of government to create a central bank that they would control, supplanting the authority given to Congress by the Constitution. These efforts culminated with a central bank known as the Federal Reserve, being given the power to issue currency and control its value while regulating America’s entire banking system.”⁶

Throughout his article, Muhammad keeps a neutral point of view by not including any persuasive language and simply reporting what is actually happening. This objectivity can also be observed because of his lack of strong adjectives. Neutral points of view are important in order to evaluate the issue of the United States debt ceiling from a broad perspective and comprehend the general idea behind said issue. But it is also necessary to examine the standpoints of the contrarians and the proponents and what arguments they offer.

⁶ Muhammad, Cedric. "Debt Ceiling Memo to Tea Party, Federal Reserve Debt Monetization Far More Dangerous than Obamacare." *Forbes*

Economic Turkey

To continue, another example of an article that referred to the United States debt ceiling when addressing the condition of the global economy was in the Washington Post, written by Stephen Kaplan. He too seems to attempt to remain objective throughout the article and below is a small fraction of the information he provided:

“Despite these economic reforms, a short-term refinancing horizon leaves countries vulnerable to rapid changes in investor sentiment. As governments from East Asia to Latin America know all too well, sudden capital withdrawals can produce dramatically higher interest rates and leave economies in shambles. Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Thailand, and more recently much of Southern Europe, have suffered such a fate, turning from economic tigers into economic turkeys seemingly overnight.” ⁷

The above selection from the Washington post article, offers one more neutral perspective. It is also a clearer example of facts being enumerated without much additional meaning. However, some may argue that certain words included in the section present hints of subjectivity. Such words include “dramatically” “suffered” “rapid” and “vulnerable”.

⁷ Kaplan, Stephen. "How the Debt Ceiling Threatens to Turn the U.S. into an Economic Turkey." *Washington Post*

Conclusion

Through research and extensive study of the United States Debt ceiling topic, the thesis that has been determined is, when a reporter presents their specific perspective, they often alter their language to appeal to specific audiences and clarify the point of view they are representing. There also exist responses to the United States Debt Ceiling that are beyond expectation. This required the taking into account of the reality that, points of view would be different not only because of the writer's country of origin but also on their political affiliation and a variety of other factors. This was most evident in the several United States news sources in that there were a number of articles written from the perspective of president Obama supporters, while there were also numerous articles written from the point of view of Tea-Party members and republicans. Moreover, financial status and relationships also played a major role in the writer's standpoint. One example being, an article from the standpoint of chief executive officers (CEOs) from the United States who were most definitely in support of the U. S. Debt Ceiling because in their opinion it was beneficial for the global economy. Overall, through one year's worth of research the topic at hand was narrowed down and sources from different countries were incorporated into the essay that supported and refuted my general argument. Language is one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal and it can also be a weapon of mass destruction. The English language is often used to illustrate a particular opinion and view point; and that is exactly why it is necessary to review numerous pieces of work, in order to grasp the entire scope of the topic being debated. "When a man wants to murder a tiger he calls it sport; when a tiger wants to murder him he calls it ferocity." (George Bernard Shaw)

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